construction activity is a long term activity and is spread over more than one year. Some of the unspent balance with the State is committed towards such activities. The relatively high unspent balance is therefore a systemic feature of the health sector reform agenda being undertaken under NRHM and does not necessarily reflect poor utilisation by the State.

6. The Government of India supports the States to facilitate appropriate and accelerated utilisation of funds released under NRHM. For this purpose series of workshops have also been organised to assist the States and build capacity for programme planning and implementation.

Conversion of wasteland into cultivatble land

†*6. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 17.45 per cent of land is wasteland in the country;

(b) if not, the facts in this regard;

(c) the area of wasteland which has been converted into agricultural land from 2006 to 2008; and

(d) the total area of wasteland targeted to be converted into cultivable land during the Eleventh Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (d) As per Wasteland Atlas of India, 2005, of Ministry of Rural Development, Department of Land Resources, Government of India, the total area of wasteland is 55.27 million ha. which is 17.45 per cent of total geographical area of the country.

Various schemes/programmes of Watershed Development are under implementation to develop the degraded land including wasteland with the objective of preventing soil erosion, land degradation, maintaining balance in different types of land uses, increasing moisture and groundwater recharge, sustaining productivity etc. It is because of these programmes that the Net Sown Area in the country has remained approximately the same *i.e.* 141 million ha. despite increase in area under non-agricultural uses over last two decades.

Government of India has targeted an area of 32.05 million ha. for development of degraded land including wastelands under various watershed development programmes during the XI Five Year Plan.

Closure of sugar mills

*7. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the price of sugar has increased very fast during the last 2-3 years due to closure of sugar mills;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.